

# **ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET**

**CASE NUMBER:** C14H-2008-0007

**HLC DATE:**

March 24, 2008

**PC DATE:**

May 13, 2008

**APPLICANT:** Carrie Bills

**HISTORIC NAME:** Wheeler-Holcomb House

**WATERSHED:** Blunn Creek

**ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE:** 905 Avondale Road

**ZONING FROM:** SF-3-NP to SF-3-H-NP

**SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from single family residence, neighborhood plan (SF-3-NP) to single family residence, neighborhood plan – Historic Landmark (SF-3-H-NP) combining district zoning.

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:** **March 24, 2007:** Recommended the proposed zoning change from single family residence, neighborhood plan (SF-3-NP) district zoning to single family residence – Historic Landmark, neighborhood plan (SF-3-H-NP) combining district zoning. Vote: 7-0 (Leary absent).

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** Recommended the proposed zoning change from single family residence, neighborhood plan (SF-3-NP) district zoning to single family residence – Historic Landmark, neighborhood plan (SF-3-H-NP) combining district zoning. Vote: 9-0.

**DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The house is listed in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984) but without a priority for research.

**CITY COUNCIL DATE:** May 22, 2008

**ACTION:**

**ORDINANCE READINGS:** 1<sup>ST</sup> 2<sup>ND</sup> 3<sup>RD</sup>

**ORDINANCE NUMBER:**

**CASE MANAGER:** Steve Sadowsky

**PHONE:** 974-6454

**NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION:** South River City Neighborhood Association

## **BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

The ca. 1938 house is an excellent example of eclectic vernacular residential design in Austin, and is particularly notable for the interspersed brick and stone facades and stone-veneered turret and porches. The house is associated with prominent local contractor Carl O. Wheeler, who built the house for his family as a triplex so that his married daughters had living quarters within the same compound. The house remained in the Wheeler-Holcomb family from 1938 to 1989, and is currently the home of prominent local real estate broker Carrie Bills. The house is a

landmark in Travis Heights for its architectural eclecticism and its location on a bluff overlooking downtown Austin.

**Architecture:**

Two-and-a-half story wing-and-gable plan brick and stone-veneered dwelling with clipped gables, single and paired 1:1 fenestration with ornamental screens, and a partial-width projecting independent porch on stone-veneered columns with a balcony above. The brick on the house is interspersed with pieces of native stone at random locations, and has a stone-veneered rounded two-story turret with a rough stone top; the turret contains the principal entry to the house off the porch and the principal door to the balcony on the second story of the porch; both are in segmental-arched surrounds.

**Historical Associations:**

The house was built in 1938 by local contractor Carl O. Wheeler for his family. The house was originally designed as a tri-plex, with Wheeler and his wife Willie occupying the bottom floor, their daughter Malcolm and her husband, J.C. Holcomb occupying the second floor, and with an additional first-floor apartment that was used by Wheeler's daughter Ruby after her husband passed away, and by their son Robert while he attended the University of Texas. Carl O. Wheeler (1880-1958) was born in Walker County and began working as a railroad carpenter in Navasota, Texas before moving to Austin in 1921. He was a building contractor, specializing in the construction of residences throughout the city, 9 of which remain. Wheeler built in the most popular residential styles of the period – particularly Tudor and Colonial Revival, and was active from the 1920s through the 1940s in residential construction in Austin.

Ruby Wheeler, one of Carl and Willie Wheeler's daughters, was widowed at an early age; her father built a small apartment on the first floor of the house for her while she worked as a saleslady at Scarbrough's and before her marriage to Eppa J. Cleveland, a cotton buyer, who went on to be an accountant for the Texas Railroad Commission. Carl and Willie's son Robert also lived in the house while he attended the University of Texas in the 1940s. Their daughter, Malcolm, had the longest residency at the house, and actually purchased the property in 1937, then contracted with her father to build the house. Malcolm had been born in Navasota in 1909, came to Austin with her parents in 1921, and met her future husband, J.C. Holcomb while he was a lodger at the family's home on Guadalupe Street while attending the University of Texas. She and Holcomb were married in 1933; she taught school in the Travis County school system for many years; he worked at Scarbrough's Department Store. They lived in the house until 1989, renting out the apartment through the 1950s and later; tenants included Oran Davis, an owner of Bettis Appliances, a long-time Austin business. Their daughter, Nancy Sawyer, an Austin public school teacher, lived in the apartment in the 1960s.

**PARCEL NO.:** 03010410090000

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** The east 58 feet (average) of Lots 11-15, Block 26, Travis Heights.

**ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT:** \$7,664 (owner-occupied); city portion: \$1,863.

**APPRAISED VALUE:** \$570,761

**PRESENT USE:** Single-family residence.

**CONDITION:** Excellent

**PRESENT OWNER:**

Carrie Bills  
905 Avondale Road  
Austin, Texas 78704

**DATE BUILT:** ca. 1938

**ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS:** None apparent.

**ORIGINAL OWNER(S):** Mrs. J.C. Holcomb (1938)

**OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS:** None.



# HISTORIC ZONING



- SUBJECT TRACT
- ZONING BOUNDARY
- PENDING CASE

OPERATOR: S. MEEKS

ZONING CASE#: C14H-2008-0007  
 ADDRESS: 905 AVONDALE RD  
 SUBJECT AREA: 0.000 ACRES  
 GRID: J20  
 MANAGER: S. SADOWSKY



1" = 200'

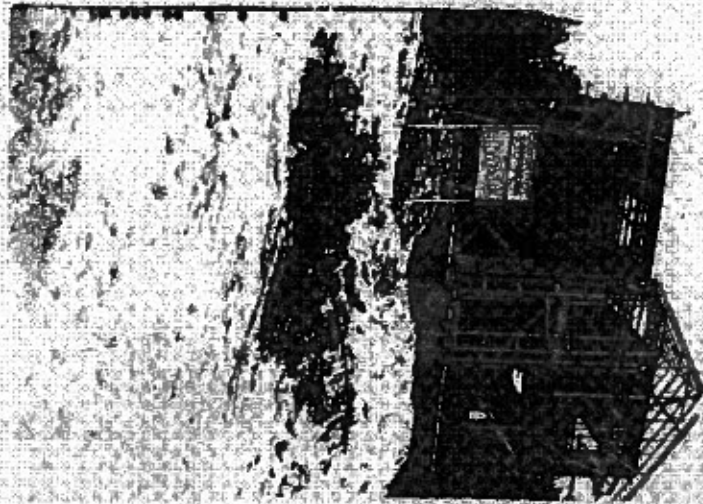
This map has been produced by G.I.S. Services for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



Wheeler-Holcomb House  
ca. 1938  
905 Avondale Road







## **F. 6: HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION— INFORMATION ON BUILDER**

Carl Oleneas Wheeler, an Austin building contractor, built the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex in 1938 as his family residence. Born in January 3, 1880, in Walker County, Texas, between Shiro and Huntsville, he and his wife, Willie, moved to Austin from Navasota, Texas, in 1921. He was a carpenter and building contractor in Austin throughout the 1920s, 1930s and in the early 1940s. He also worked as an estimator for Kelly Lumber Company around 1947. He died January 11, 1958 at the age of 78.

Carl O. Wheeler first appears in Austin city directories in 1922 and is listed as a carpenter. By 1927, Carl O. Wheeler is listed as a building contractor both in the residential and business listings of the directories. From 1942-47, he is listed as an estimator for Kelly Lumber Company. He retired in approximately 1948-49 and died on January 11, 1958.

In researching mechanic's liens that he granted from 1927-1941, 13 structures were found. Of those structures, nine remain. A summary of the remaining structures, supporting evidence including copies of the mechanic's liens and original subdivision maps as well as current photos of the existing houses are provided.

Carl O. Wheeler was a skilled craftsman and contractor and his craft can be seen in prominent neighborhoods throughout the city, such as Travis Heights, Rosedale, Tarrytown, Zilker and Eastwoods.



## F. 1: HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION— DEED CHRONOLOGY

### Deed Research for 905 Avondale

| Transaction  | Vol./Page               |
|--|-------------------------|
| Citizens Loan and Investment Co. to City of Austin to J.O. Creighton<br>Lots 11-15, Block 26, Travis Heights Addition<br>Nov. 1, 1937 1435<br>Land awarded as a part of settlement       | Volume 530, pp. 393     |
| J. O. Creighton to W.R. Nabors<br>Lots 11-15, Block 26, Travis Heights Addition<br>Nov. 14, 1935<br>\$1,750.00   | Volume 530, pp. 391-82  |
| W.R. and Lula S. Nabours to Mrs. Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb<br>Portion of Lots 11-15, Block 26, Travis Heights Addition<br>Jan. 19, 1937<br>\$700.00  | Volume 554, pp. 483-84  |
| C.O. Wheeler grants mechanic's lien to<br>Mrs. Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb, John C. Holcomb<br>to build 11 room, two story house<br>Portion of Lots 11-15<br>Feb, 17, 1938<br>\$4,000.00     | Volume 592, pp. 83-84   |
| C.O. Wheeler grants mechanic's lien to<br>Mrs. Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb, John C. Holcomb<br>For substantial improvements to house<br>Portion of Lots 11-15<br>Jun, 15, 1938<br>\$1,139.00 | Volume 592, pp. 85      |
| Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb and John C. Holcomb<br>deed portion of house to Ruby Cleveland and C.O. Wheeler<br>\$42% to C.O. Wheeler, 16.8% to Mrs. Ruby Cleveland<br>Oct. 18, 1944<br>\$1   | Volume 748, pp. 453-454 |
| John C. Holcomb, C.O. Wheeler and E.J. Cleveland<br>Agree build driveway<br>July 17, 1946  | Volume 778, pp. 521     |

C.O. Wheeler dies Jan. 17, 1958, however, last will and testament (dated Nov. 29, 1947) filed Jan. 4, 1962, deeding his portion of house to four children split equally among four heirs

Family Records

Robert Amick Wheeler deeds his portion of house (inherited from C.O. Wheeler) to Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb  
Real Property Records #10974 0183  
June 28, 1989  
\$10

Warranty Deed

Ruby dies in July, 1975. Epps J. Cleveland  
Deeds her portion to Wheelers; Burial date: Aug. 3, 1975

Family Records

Nancy Sawyer (89.5%) and Lynell Edmiston aka Edmisten (10.5%)  
To Margaret Carrie Bills  
Nov. 25, 1998  
\$224,000 first lien  
\$28,000 second lien

Warranty Deed w/ Vendor's  
Lien; Real Property Records  
#3320 2189

## F. 2: HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION— OCCUPANCY HISTORY

### Occupancy Research for 905 Avondale

| Year         | Occupant Name and Reference                                | Source                |
|--------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1938-46      | Cleveland, Eppa J (Ruby C) cotton buyer r 905 Avondale     | City Directories      |
| 1938-46      | Cleveland, Ruby C Mrs slwn, Scarbroughs r 905 Avondale     | City Directories      |
| 1938-89      | Holcomb, John C (Malcolm) slsmn Scarbroughs r 905 Avondale | City Directories      |
| 1938-89      | Holcomb, Malcolm L Mrs tchr County PS r 905 Avondale Rd    | City Directories      |
| 1938-68      | Wheeler, Carl O bldg contr. 905 Avondale Rd.               | City Directories      |
| 1940-47      | Wheeler, Rbt A student U of T r 905 Avondale               | City Directories      |
| 1952         | Davis, Oran r 905 Avondale                                 | City Directories      |
| 1944-67      | Nancy Sawyer r 905 Avondale                                | City Directories      |
| 1968-present | Margaret Carrie Bills                                      | City Directories/Deed |

### **F. 3: HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION— BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON OWNERS AND OCCUPANTS**

The Wheeler and Malcolm families were the primary occupants of the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex until 1998 when the house was sold to Margaret Carrie Bills, the present owner. The house was built by Carl Oleneas Wheeler, a local contractor, for his family. Built as a triplex with an additional small first-floor apartment, the triplex housed Carl O. Wheeler, his wife Willie on the bottom floor and their daughter, Malcolm, and her husband, John C. Holcomb, and their daughter Nancy, occupied the second floor. Ruby and Robert Wheeler, two of Carl and Willie's children also lived with their parents in the first floor of the house.

Carl Oleneas Wheeler was born in Walker County, Texas, between Shiro and Huntsville on January 3, 1880<sup>1</sup>. In Navasota, he worked on the railroad and as a carpenter<sup>2</sup>. In 1921, he and his wife, Willie, moved to Austin from Navasota, Texas. He was a carpenter and independent building contractor in Austin throughout the 1920s, 1930s and in the early 1940s. He also worked as an estimator for Kelly Lumber Company from 1944–1947<sup>3</sup>. He died January 11, 1958 at the age of 78.

Research through reverse deed index at the Travis County Clerk's Office document 12 structures that Carl O. Wheeler built and one that he extensively remodelled. Of those 13 structures, nine remain. See section F:6 Historical Documentation for a complete list of all the structures, supporting evidence and photographs.

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<sup>1</sup> *Austin Statesman*, obituary for Carl O. Wheeler, January 11, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Austin History Center, U.S. Federal Census, 1910 and 1920.

<sup>3</sup> Austin History Center, Austin City Directories 1922, 1924, 1927, 1929, 1930–31, 1932–33, 1935, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1947.

Census records in 1920 indicate that Willie Wheeler (nee Amick) was 27 in 1910 and therefore her date of birth was around 1883. A World War I draft card found for her brother, Laurence Adolphus Amick, indicates that he was born in 1888 in Shiro, Texas, which is likely where Willie was born. She and Carl probably married in Navasota, Texas. The census also reveals that she had a daughter named Luella, who was four months old in 1910. Luella died as an infant, though the family knows little about the circumstances. Willie Wheeler's obituary does list four sisters and one brother, Adolphus Ameck (Amick) of Huntsville. Willie Amick Wheeler died Monday, May 25, 1946.<sup>4</sup>

Ruby Carl Wheeler, one of Carl and Willie Wheeler's daughters, lived in the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex for several years. Ruby was widowed at an early age and lived in a small apartment that was constructed for her on the first floor. Ruby worked as a salesperson at Scarbrough's Department Store. Ruby then married Eppa J. Cleveland, a cotton buyer and later an accountant for the Texas Railroad Commission. Ruby and E.J. Cleveland lived in the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex from 1938–1946 before moving to Midland, Texas for the remainder of their lives.<sup>5</sup>

Robert Amick Wheeler lived in the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex from 1940–1947 while attending the University of Texas. He served in the US Army in WWII in the early 1940s<sup>6</sup>. In the late 1940s, he moved to Port Arthur, Texas, where he worked as a chemical engineer with the Texaco Oil Company. He resided in the Port Arthur/Beaumont area until his death November 7, 1991.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Austin Statesman*, obituary for Willie Amick Wheeler, May 27, 1946.

<sup>5</sup> Austin History Center, *Austin City Directories*, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1944–45.

<sup>6</sup> Austin History Center, *Austin City Directories*, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1944–45, 1947.

<sup>7</sup> Social Security Death Index for Robert A. Wheeler.

The small apartment in the triplex was rented out throughout the fifties. In 1952, Oran Davis lived in the apartment<sup>15</sup>. Davis was co-owner of Bettis Appliance, an important local business in Austin from the late 1940s to 2002.<sup>16</sup>

Born in Austin on October 25, 1944, Nancy Sawyer (nee Holcomb) lived with her parents in the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex until 1967 when she began teaching school at Brook Elementary School in Austin and took up residence in her own apartment. Nancy Sawyer taught school in the Austin area for 34 years, teaching elementary school for 29 years and then teaching Texas history to middle school students for the last five years of her career. She has been married to Marion Martin Sawyer since 1968.<sup>17</sup>

After John C. and Malcolm Holcomb moved out of the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex in 1989, the triplex sat vacant for a short time. The top floor was rented out for approximately seven years. In November, 1998, Nancy Sawyer and Lynnel Edmiston, the only surviving child of Carl O. and Willie Wheeler, sold the triplex to Margaret Carrie Bills.

Margaret Carrie Bills, the second child of seven, was born February 20, 1955 at the United States Navy Hospital in Groton, Connecticut. She grew up in Virginia, Puerto Rico, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Carrie Bills graduated from Salve Regina College in Newport, Rhode Island, where she also began her real estate career specializing in historic properties. In 1987, she moved to Austin, Texas, where she continued her real estate brokerage business and started her own company Green Mango Real Estate in 1999.

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<sup>15</sup> Austin History Center, *Austin City Directories*, 1952.

<sup>16</sup> "After More than 60 Years, Austin, Texas, Losing Bettis Appliance Store," *Austin American-Statesman*, August 6, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Family Records, Nancy Sawyer.



# **CARL O. WHEELER**

Carl O. Wheeler, a retired building contractor, died at his home, 905 Acondale Road Friday morning. He was 78 and was born in Walker County between Shiro and Huntsville on Jan. 3, 1880. He had lived in Austin since 1921, having moved here with his family from Nevada. He was a building contractor here for many years prior to his retirement. He had been in ill health for the past three years. His wife died in May of 1946.

He is survived by three daughters, Mrs. J. C. Holcomb and Mrs. Ben Edmiston, both of Austin, and Mrs. E. J. Cleveland Jr. of Midland; a son, Robert Amick Wheeler of Port Arthur; four granddaughters, Nancy Lou Holcomb, Carole, Donna Kay and Debra Lynn Edmiston, all of Austin; a brother, J. G. Wheeler of Port Arthur, and a sister, Mrs. Bessie Goodman of Mineral Wells.

The body will lie in state at the Cook Funeral Home.

Funeral services are tentatively set for Sunday afternoon.

# **Obituary**

**WHEELER:** Mrs. C. O. Wheeler died at her home, 905 Acondale Road Saturday night. She is survived by her husband, C. O. Wheeler of Austin; three daughters, Mrs. J. C. Holcomb and Mrs. Ben Edmiston, both of Austin, and Mrs. E. J. Cleveland of Amarillo; one son, Mr. Amick Wheeler of Austin; four sisters, Mrs. J. C. Browder of Tom Ball, Mrs. Carrier Lancaster of Goose Creek, Mrs. Wilbur Knot of Ellart and Miss Jessie Amick of Shiro; one brother, Adolphus Amick of Huntsville and two grandchildren.

Funeral services were held from Cook Funeral Home at 3 p. m. Monday, with Rev. Earl Simms officiating. Pallbearers were J. C. Holcomb, E. J. Cleveland, Jr., Ben Edmiston, J. C. Browder, John Wesley Amick and Roy E. Holcomb. Burial was in Memorial Park Cemetery.

## **J.C. Holcomb**

J.C. Holcomb, age 80, of Austin, died Thursday.

He was a longtime employee of Scarbrough's Department Store and very active with local coin clubs.

He is survived by his wife, Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb; daughter and son-in-law, Nancy and Martha Sawyer; and grandchildren, Laura and Kevin Sawyer, all of Austin.

Services will be at 2:00 P.M. Monday at Weed-Corley Funeral Home; Reverend Bruno Schmidt officiating. Burial will be in Austin Memorial Park.

Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice Austin, 5555 N. Lamar, Austin, Texas.

Arrangements by Weed-Corley Funeral Home, 3125 N. Lamar. 452-8811.

WWI Draft Card

| REGISTRATION CARD   |        | 42-3-18-C<br>REGISTRAR'S REPORT  |        |        |       |      |       |  |  |      |      |      |        |        |        |        |       |   |    |     |   |    |     |      |      |
|---|--------|--|--------|--------|-------|------|-------|--|--|------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|---|----|-----|---|----|-----|------|------|
| <p><i>Carl Aleneay Wheeler</i></p> <p><i>Nebraska, Reno 2x</i></p> <p><i>Jan 3-5 1880</i></p> <p><i>Farmer</i></p> <p><i>Self</i></p> <p><i>Nebraska, Reno 2x</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Willie Wheeler</i></p> <p><i>Nebraska, Reno 2x</i></p> <p><i>Carl Aleneay Wheeler</i></p> |        | <p><b>DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="3">HEIGHT</th> <th colspan="3">BUILD</th> <th rowspan="2">EYES</th> <th rowspan="2">HAIR</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Feet</th> <th>Inches</th> <th>Weight</th> <th>Height</th> <th>Weight</th> <th>Build</th> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>10</td> <td>150</td> <td>5</td> <td>10</td> <td>150</td> <td>Blue</td> <td>Dark</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>Has person lost eyes, legs, hands, or is he chronically physically disabled?</i></p> <p><i>No</i></p> <p><i>40 24 18</i></p> <p><i>9/1/18</i></p> <p><b>Notary Public for the County of G. State of Texas, Nebraska, Texas</b></p> <p><b>OFFICE OF LOCAL BOARD</b></p> <p><small>(The stamp of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the area in which the registrant has his permanent home shall be placed in this box.)</small></p> |        | HEIGHT |       |      | BUILD |  |  | EYES | HAIR | Feet | Inches | Weight | Height | Weight | Build | 5 | 10 | 150 | 5 | 10 | 150 | Blue | Dark |
| HEIGHT  |        |  | BUILD  |        |       | EYES | HAIR  |  |  |      |      |      |        |        |        |        |       |   |    |     |   |    |     |      |      |
| Feet  | Inches | Weight   | Height | Weight | Build |      |       |  |  |      |      |      |        |        |        |        |       |   |    |     |   |    |     |      |      |
| 5   | 10     | 150  | 5      | 10     | 150   | Blue | Dark  |  |  |      |      |      |        |        |        |        |       |   |    |     |   |    |     |      |      |

## **F. 9: HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION— BRIEF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

In the 1920s, a series of picturesque villas were built in Austin. Okewell (the Judge Robert Lynn Batts House), the Edmund & Emily Maverick Miller House, the Gillespie & Agnes Stacy House and the Louis & Matilde Reuter House are all substantial, irregular houses with some Mediterranean Revival features, significantly all on very steep lots, often with terracing. Most are City and State Landmarks. The Wheeler–Holcomb Triplex, built in 1938, was constructed later than the other houses, and its basic architectural vocabulary owes as much to Craftsman as Mediterranean stylistic influences. Yet features such as the crenelated inset stone entrance front tower, the stone verandah, the remarkable decorative rocks interspersed on the common bond brick walls and the very steep lot with stone walls and terraces are very much in the spirit of the villas constructed a decade earlier. The elevated siting of the triplex gives it a particular presence in the Travis Heights neighborhood, and it can also be seen from many old and new buildings on the north side of Lady Bird Lake. It should be noted also that the Wheeler–Holcomb Triplex retains an exceptionally high architectural integrity, with minimal exterior changes over the past 70 years. The builder and original homeowner, Carl O. Wheeler, built a number of homes throughout important Austin neighborhoods, contributing greatly to the historic fabric of Austin. A significant and pleasantly idiosyncratic property in 2008, the Wheeler–Holcomb Triplex will grow further in importance with the passage of time. It fully warrants formal recognition and protection.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Introduction written by Peter Maxson, architectural historian.

**The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex: Carl O. Wheeler, builder**

The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex was constructed in 1938 by Carl Oleatus Wheeler, a local building contractor, as his family residence. Born January 3, 1880, in Walker County, Texas, Carl Wheeler worked on the railroad and as a carpenter before moving to Austin with his wife, Willie, and children in 1921. Upon moving to Austin, he continued to work as a carpenter throughout the 1920s and then became an independent building contractor throughout the late 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. Carl Wheeler's houses can today be found in the neighborhoods of Travis Heights, Rosedale, Zilker, Eastwoods, Tarrytown and Cherrywood. He also made his mark on South Congress as the builder of a 1935 tourist court. The Rio Grande Courts along South Congress Avenue, between Oltorf and Cumberland, endured until the early 1990s.

**The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex: Architectural Description**

The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex sits high upon a steep lot with significant terracing and walls. The two-story structure displays a unique folk-art masonry construction with wire-struck Elgin Butler brick of four different shades with irregularly inlaid rusticated, uncoarsed ashlar. The most dramatic feature of the house is the two story stone turret with a jagged stone crown that helps give the structure its storybook appeal by interplaying with the steep grade of the site. A roof top deck and second floor balcony reveal breathtaking views of downtown Austin. The clipped cross-gabled roof features exposed rafter tails and fishscale composition shingles as well as decorative brackets and an unenclosed wide eave overhang. The front of the house features one-over-one double-hung wood windows with segmental pediments. The window screens are all original and in the Craftsman style and the original front door is in the baskethandle or elliptical style. The solidly built concrete-poured porch sits high and is supported by four square columns faced in a similar style to the turret with face-layed stone.

The Wheeler–Holcomb Triplex is unusual in that it has a large basement in which you can clearly see the poured concrete piers and exposed bedrock. Historic photographs reveal that the lumber for the house came from Brydson Lumber Company. The iron railing on the stairs and first floor balcony is hand forged and features original clips in many places. The railing was carefully heated and bent to accommodate the curve of the stairs<sup>19</sup>.

Other whimsical original features include a metal owl that sits atop the original front drain spout as well as a seventy year old wisteria vine, planted by Willie Wheeler, that climbs to the second floor of the house and wraps around the balcony. Further, Nancy Sawyer's doll house, dating from the 1940s, sits on the porch and is in excellent condition. It should be noted that original house plans were salvaged by the present owner and are preserved, framed and displayed at 905 Avondale Road.

### **The Geology of the House**

The Wheeler–Holcomb Triplex is notable for the wide array of geological history that is featured in the rocks that are both inlaid in the brick and on the stone turret and columns. The rocks were carefully hand-picked and hand-placed and tell the story of Central Texas geology. Colorado River terrace deposit conglomerates, petrified wood, fossiliferous limestone, polished granite, chert, hickory sandstone and gneiss are all featured. A large outcropping of exposed bedrock from the Austin Chalk Formation is seen in the basement and water flows from the bedrock in heavy rains, irrigating the terraced front gardens. The lot is extremely steep and is estimated to have a grade of at least thirty feet from Avondale Road to the southern border of the property.

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<sup>19</sup> Ironwork consultation from Lars Stanley, a local metal worker and architect.



### **The Interior of the House**

The interior has seen minor changes, all of which are sympathetic to the 1930s era of the house. The wooden front doors, screens and floors are original and the upstairs triplex features a beautiful, original mosaic tile floor.

The three bathrooms in the house feature original tile floors and original fixtures from bathtub faucets to lights. The two bathrooms with bathtubs have an unusual wooden arched opening above the tubs. Both downstairs kitchens have original cabinets and cabinet handles as well as original tile and light fixtures. The downstairs apartment kitchen oven is original to the house as well. The downstairs kitchen even has its original built-in ironing board with a 1930s flour sack. In all, six original light fixtures are on the first floor of the triplex. The upstairs dwelling has three original light fixtures and the kitchen features original tile, cabinetry and faucet. The house is strikingly similar to its 1938 appearance both inside and out.

### **The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex: Wheeler and Holcomb families**

Carl Wheeler designed the home as a triplex to be shared with his oldest daughter, Malcolm and her husband John C. Holcomb. The families had resided together for several years, going back to the early 1930s, when John C. Holcomb was a University of Texas student and lodger at the Wheeler residence at 2505 Guadalupe and later at 2511 Guadalupe. It was there that he met Malcolm and they were married on August 19, 1933. The two families decided to build a home together. The Wheelers had three other children, daughters Ruby Carl and Lynell and son, Robert Amick. In 1936 or 1937, their daughter, Ruby, was widowed at a young age and it was decided that an apartment would be included in the house construction for Ruby to live.



On January 19, 1937, Malcomb Wheeler Holcomb purchased the lot at 905 Avondale Road from W.R. and Lula S. Nabours for \$700. On February 17, 1938, Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb and John C. Holcomb contracted Carl Wheeler to build an "eleven room two story house with a basement and three baths, with brick and stone veneer" for \$4,000. On June 15, 1938, Malcolm Wheeler Holcomb and John C. Holcomb contracted Carl Wheeler to make the following improvements: "tile around the edge of the porch and iron railing on upper and lower porches, deck steps and lower porch steps; painting the outside of house, deck on top of house and garage; grills in front screen doors, door check on outside screen doors; screens on basement windows and windows and door over garage; rock walls and rock concrete steps; concrete wall around basement" for \$1,139.<sup>20</sup> In 1944, the ownership of the house was transferred in such a way that for the sum of \$1, Carl Wheeler obtained 42% of the house and Ruby Cleveland obtained 16.8% of the house. In 1946, a steep driveway was constructed along the east side of the property.<sup>21</sup>

In the early 1940s, the house was occupied on the first floor by Carl and Willie Wheeler. Willie Wheeler, the matriarch of the Wheeler family, died Monday, May 25, 1946, and Carl Wheeler died January 11, 1958. Ruby, who worked as a salesperson at Scarbrough's Department Store, married a gentleman named Eppa J. Cleveland, a cotton buyer and later an accountant for the Texas Railroad Commission and they lived in the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex from 1939-46 before moving to Midland, Texas where they resided for the remainder of their lives<sup>22</sup>.

Robert Amick Wheeler, Carl and Willie's only son, lived at the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex from 1939 to 1947 during which time he enlisted in the United States Army and attended the University of Texas<sup>23</sup>. In the late 1940s, Robert relocated to the Port Arthur area where he

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<sup>20</sup> Travis County Clerk Record of Deeds, Volume 592, Page 85

<sup>21</sup> Travis County Clerk Record of Deeds, Volume 778, Page 521

<sup>22</sup> Austin History Center, Austin City Directory, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1944-45

<sup>23</sup> Austin History Center, Austin City Directory, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1944-45

worked as a chemical engineer with the Texaco Oil Company. He resided in the Port Arthur/Beaumont area until his death on November 7, 1991.

Malcolm and John C. Holcomb occupied the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex longer than any other family members. John Holcomb was born September 26, 1909, in Midway, Texas, between Temple and Belton. He worked and managed the ladies shoe department at Scarbrough's for over 40 years. Malcolm was born in Navasota, Texas, on December 10, 1909, and taught at several Travis County schools until the birth of their only child, Nancy, in 1944. The Holcombs lived in the top floor of the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex until 1989 when they moved in with their daughter, Nancy. John Holcomb died in January 11, 1990 and Malcolm Holcomb died January 11, 1991. Nancy lived in the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex from her birth in 1944 until 1967. She married Marion Martin Sawyer and like her mother, chose teaching as a profession. Nancy taught in Austin area schools for over 35 years.

In 1998, Nancy Sawyer and the only remaining Wheeler child, Lynnel Edmiston (nee Wheeler), who never lived in the dwelling, sold the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex to Margaret Carrie Bills. Carrie Bills spent several years restoring the interior and the gardens and has left the original architectural features of the house untouched. As a realtor with a background and specialization in historic properties, Carrie Bills was well-suited to the task of renovating the property.

Carrie Bills purchased the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex at 905 Avondale Road because she deeply appreciated the architecture, quality of construction and location. Further, she was looking for a dwelling that would be a home for her, her sister and three small children. As the home was built as a

three-family complex, it had the necessary room. To preserve, protect and restore the home has and always will be the focus of any word to the house.

#### **Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex: A Travis Heights and Austin Treasure**

The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex fully warrants formal recognition and protection as a City Historic Landmark. The seventy-year old dwelling features a folk-masonry style that is heavily influenced by the Craftsman and Mediterranean movements. While not extremely rare, the masonry style is not commonplace and the Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex is a superb example of both the rusticated ashlar rock inlaid in the brick as well as the face-layed ashlar that comprises the façade of the turret. The structure's massing and siting give it a prominent and almost looming presence along Avondale Road in historic Travis Heights. The triplex was built by a local contractor and craftsman for his family and as such, was the pinnacle home of Carl O. Wheeler's building career. Carl Wheeler's homes are found throughout important Austin inner-city, historic neighborhoods such as Travis Heights, Rosedale, Tarrytown, Zilker, and Eastwoods. The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex sits atop a steep lot and features lovely terracing and stone walls that characterize the property as much as the structure. Built at the same time as the structure, terraced walls and walkways are of great value to the property and should not be overlooked. The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex is a critical building to the architectural fabric of the Travis Heights neighborhood. In 1913, when Charles Newning, John Swisher and General William Stacy planned a new subdivision east of Fairview Park and the Swisher Addition known as Travis Heights, the subdivision was laid out with both curving and grid streets and provided lot sizes and prices to fit a range of customers, from the builders of modest bungalows to grand home-sites with commanding vistas<sup>24</sup>. The Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex epitomizes the quintessential Travis Heights home and should be recognized for its architectural beauty and historic significance.

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<sup>24</sup> Travis Heights... "A Critical Period" a report prepared for: South River City Citizens by University of Texas School of Architecture 1974.

OK 1-9-08  
SS 2-27-08

## A. APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC ZONING

PROJECT INFORMATION:

CHH-2008-0007

Row ID# 10119170

### DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY

APPLICATION DATE: 02/28/2008 FILE NUMBER(S): CHH-2008-0007  
TENTATIVE HLC DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
TENTATIVE PC or ZAP DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
TENTATIVE CC DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY INITIATED: YES / NO  
CASE MANAGER: ST. J. S. ROLLBACK: YES/NO  
APPLICATION ACCEPTED BY: [Signature]

### BASIC PROJECT DATA:

1. OWNER'S NAME: Margaret Carrie Bills
2. PROJECT NAME: Wheeler-Holcomb Triplex
3. PROJECT STREET ADDRESS (or Range): 905 Avondale Road  
ZIP: 78704-2518 COUNTY: Travis

### AREA TO BE REZONED:

4. SQ.FT.: 3,034

### 5. ZONING AND LAND USE INFORMATION:

| EXISTING ZONING | EXISTING USE | TRACT# (IF MORE THAN 1) | ACRES / SQ. FT. | PROPOSED USE | PROPOSED ZONING |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| SF-3            | residence    | _____                   | 3,034           | residential  | historic        |

### RELATED CURRENT CASES:

- |                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| 6. ACTIVE ZONING CASE?   | No |
| 7. RESTRICTIVE COVENANT? | No |
| 8. SUBDIVISION?          | No |
| 9. SITE PLAN?            | No |

**PROPERTY DESCRIPTION (SUBDIVISION REFERENCE OR METES AND BOUNDS):**

**10a. SUBDIVISION REFERENCE:** Name: Travis Heights

Block: 28 Lots: 11-15 Outlot(s): N/A

Plat Book: 3 Page Number: 15

**10b. METES AND BOUNDS** (Attach two copies of certified field notes if subdivision reference is not available or zoning includes partial lots):

See Attachment A: Warranty Deed, dated June 28, 1989

**DEED REFERENCE CONVEYING PROPERTY TO PRESENT OWNER AND TAX PARCEL I.D.:**

**11. VOLUME:** 13320 **PAGE:** 02189 **TAX PARCEL I.D. NO.** 03-0104-1009-0000 4

**OTHER PROVISIONS:**

**12. IS PROPERTY IN A ZONING COMBINING DISTRICT / OVERLAY ZONE?** YES

TYPE OF COMBINING DIST/OVERLAY ZONE (NCCD, NP, etc): NP- South River City

**13. LOCATED IN A LOCAL OR NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT?** NO

**14. IS A TIA REQUIRED?** NO (NOT REQUIRED IF BASE ZONING IS NOT CHANGING)

**OWNERSHIP TYPE:**

**15. X SOLE** ☐ **COMMUNITY PROPERTY** ☐ **PARTNERSHIP** ☐ **CORPORATION**  
☐ **TRUST**

If ownership is other than sole or community property, list individuals/partners/principals below or attach separate sheet.

**OWNER INFORMATION:**

**16. OWNER CONTACT INFORMATION**

SIGNATURE: 

NAME: Margaret Carrie Bills

FIRM NAME: N/A

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 512.851.0978

STREET ADDRESS: 905 Avondale Road

CITY: Austin STATE: Texas ZIP CODE: 78704-2518

EMAIL ADDRESS: carrie@greenmangorealestate.com

**AGENT INFORMATION (IF APPLICABLE):**

**17. AGENT CONTACT INFORMATION**

SIGNATURE: 

NAME: Kim McKnight

FIRM NAME: N/A

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 512.663.6422

STREET ADDRESS: 1801 Anita Drive

CITY: Austin STATE: Texas ZIP CODE: 78704

CONTACT PERSON: Kim McKnight TELEPHONE NUMBER: 512.663-6422

EMAIL ADDRESS: kimmcknight@austin.rr.com

**DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY:**

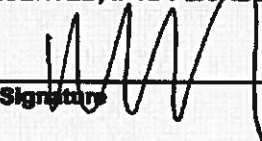
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## D. SUBMITTAL VERIFICATION AND INSPECTION AUTHORIZATION

### SUBMITTAL VERIFICATION

My signature attests to the fact that the attached application package is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that proper City staff review of this application is dependent upon the accuracy of the information provided and that any inaccurate or inadequate information provided by me/my firm/etc., may delay the proper review of this application.

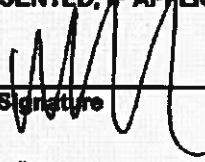
PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NAME BELOW SIGNATURE AND INDICATE FIRM REPRESENTED, IF APPLICABLE.

  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2/26/08  
MARGARET Carrie Bills  
Name (Typed or Printed)  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Firm (if applicable)

### INSPECTION AUTHORIZATION

As owner or authorized agent, my signature authorizes staff to visit and inspect the property for which this application is being submitted.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NAME BELOW SIGNATURE AND INDICATE FIRM REPRESENTED, IF APPLICABLE.

  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2-26-08  
MARGARET Carrie Bills  
Name (Typed or Printed)  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Firm (if applicable)



## **E. ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM**


concerning  
Subdivision Plat Notes, Deed Restrictions,  
Restrictive Covenants  
and / or  
Zoning Conditional Overlays

I, Margaret Carrie Bills, have checked for subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlays prohibiting certain uses and/or requiring certain development restrictions i.e. height, access, screening etc. on this property, located at

905 Avondale Road, Austin, Texas 78704

If a conflict should result with the request I am submitting to the City of Austin due to subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlays it will be my responsibility to resolve it. I also acknowledge that I understand the implications of use and/or development restrictions that are a result of a subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlays.

I understand that if requested, I must provide copies of any and all subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlay information which may apply to this property.

  
(Applicant's signature)

2-20-08

(Date)

TAX CERTIFICATE  
Nelda Wells Spears  
Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector  
P.O. Box 1748  
Austin, Texas 78767  
(512) 854-9473

NO 611477

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 03-0104-1009-0000

PROPERTY OWNER:

BILLS MARGARET CARRIE  
905 AVONDALE RD  
AUSTIN, TX 78704-2518

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:

E58FT AV LOT 11-15 BLK 26 TRAVIS H  
EIGHTS

ACRES 0.000 MIN+ .00000 TYPE

SITUS INFORMATION: 905 AVONDALE RD

This is to certify that after a careful check of tax records of this office, the following taxes, delinquent taxes, penalties and interests are due on the described property of the following tax unit(s):

| YEAR | ENTITY                            | TOTAL      |
|------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 2007 | AUSTIN ISD                        | *ALL PAID* |
|      | CITY OF AUSTIN (TRAV)             | *ALL PAID* |
|      | TRAVIS COUNTY                     | *ALL PAID* |
|      | TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTHCARE DISTRICT | *ALL PAID* |
|      | ACC (TRAVIS)                      | *ALL PAID* |

TOTAL SEQUENCE 0

TOTAL TAX:  
UNPAID FEES:  
INTEREST ON FEES:  
COMMISSION:  
TOTAL DUE ==>

\*ALL PAID\*  
\*ALL PAID\*  
\* NONE \*  
\* NONE \*  
\* NONE \*  
\*ALL PAID\*

TAXES PAID FOR YEAR 2007 \$9,595.59

ALL TAXES PAID IN FULL PRIOR TO AND INCLUDING THE YEAR 2007 EXCEPT FOR UNPAID YEARS LISTED ABOVE.

The above described property may be subject to special valuation based on its use, and additional rollback taxes may become due. (Section 23.55, State Property Tax Code).

Pursuant to Section 31.08 of the State Property Tax Code, there is a fee of \$10.00 for all Tax Certificates.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE ON THIS DATE OF 02/04/2008

Fee Paid: \$10.00

Nelda Wells Spears  
Tax Assessor-Collector

By: 